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Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office for Small-Scale Agriculture



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U.S. Department of Agriculture - Cooperative State Research Service - Agricultural Research For A Better Tomorrow

AT ISSUE...MARKETING

The number of farmers' markets across the country continues to expand and more will be developed over the next several years, according to the 1992 National Farmers' Market Survey. The survey, conducted by Public Market Partners this spring, found that over 1,800 farmers' markets operated nationally in 1991. This compares with slightly under 1,700 in 1988.

State agriculture officials were interviewed in 49 States. The vast majority (85%) expect that more farmers' markets will be created over the next 3 years. What's going to limit this growth? The lack of farmers to sell at the markets, answered most respondents.

Several States reported large increases. California had 175 farmers' markets in operation in 1991, an increase of 49 since 1988. Wisconsin has added 34 markets, Iowa 22, and New York 17.

Interestingly, the increase in the number of farmers' markets has occurred as many State agriculture departments have experienced significant cutbacks. In some instances, this has helped the farmers' markets: State officials are focusing their efforts on local activities rather than on national and international marketing. Other States are learning how to do more with less, working in partnership with (and helping to spawn) private associations of farmers' markets and assisting the sponsors of farmers' markets in local communities.

Almost every State (85%) has an agency that provides organizational assistance to help localities establish and sustain farmers' markets, most (73%) have programs to promote the markets, about half help recruit farmers, and 26 percent provide some financial support. The financial support varies greatly. While some States, especially in the South, own and operate farmers' markets, others give small cash awards to markets that show the biggest growth or they provide matching funds (measured in the hundreds of dollars) for advertising.

Farmers' markets coupon programs, underway in 19 States, have been a boon to farmers' markets. Federal and State funding has provided over 300,000 low-income and at-risk citizens with special coupons that can only be redeemed by

farmers at certified markets. Typically, farmers report a 25 percent increase in their market sales with the coupons. In Connecticut, the availability of coupons has helped increase the number of farmers' markets from 16 in 1987 to 26 in 1991; as the program has taken hold, the number of participating farmers grew from 70 to 130 during the same period. New York State, which has the largest coupon program, expects to add 16 more farmers' markets for the 1992 season.

Congress is in the midst of reauthorizing the Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program for 1993 and 1994 with additional funding. The nine States that currently receive Federal matching funds will be joined by nine new States. The appropriation process will begin this summer. The coupon program is administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. (Comments of Theodore Morrow-Spitzer, Co-founder, Public Market Partners, May 20, 1992)

Public Market Partners is a not-for-profit organization that works to revitalize and establish public markets and farmers' markets by providing technical assistance and educational outreach and by conducting research. To receive the free public market newsletter, Public Market Press, please contact: Ted Spitzer, PMP, 5454 Palisade Ave, Bronx, NY 10471; telephone 212-884-5716.

IMPORTANT

Topic, technologies and calendar of events (yours) are very important to the Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA). Keep them coming!

Please note our new address: H. W. Kerr, Jr., USDA-CSRS, OSSA, Suite 328A Aerospace Building, Washington, DC 20250-2200; new telephone 202-401-1805, and new Fax 202-401-1804.

And another point - the response to an article about the OSSA that appeared recently in a national magazine resulted in a substantial increase in the mailing list for this publication. Please - if you do not want to receive the free quarterly newsletter or if you change your mailing address, write OSSA at the above address and let us know. Thanks!

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Roadside Markets - For only \$5.50, "Facilities for Roadside Markets" (NRAES-52) is an invaluable tool for helping individuals plan a large farmer's market. Details covering all aspects, e.g., display area, back room, preparation area, parking areas, zoning ordinances, signs, etc., are discussed. Contact: Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service, Cooperative Extension, 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-5701; telephone 607-255-7654.

And Also - Another NRAES resource, "Produce Handling for Direct Market" (NRAES-51), costs \$5.50. This book discusses handling through harvest, transport, storage, and display. Use the NRAES address and telephone number listed above.

New - "Sell What You Sow! The Grower's Guide to Successful Produce Marketing" is a new 224-page book scheduled for release in September 1992. The book's 30 chapters cover all aspects of high-value marketing--from crop selection to market outlets to promotion. The cost is \$19.95 plus \$2.50 shipping. Contact: New World Publishing, 3701 Clair Drive, Carmichael, CA 95608; telephone 916-944-7932.

News and Ideas - "Growing for Market" is published monthly and costs \$24 per year in the U.S. Its editor's goal is to help small and beginning market gardeners save and make money or a living from a sustainable farming operation. Contact: Lynn Byczynski, Fairplain Publications, P.O. Box 365, Auburn, KS 66402.

Exclude or Confine - "Fences for Pasture and Garden" weighs the pros and cons of various fences and helps builders--from backyard hobbyists to full-time farmers. This material reference costs \$16.90 (paperback). Contact: Storey Communications, Inc., Schoolhouse Road, Pownal, VT 05261; telephone 1-800-827-8673.

Versatile Tropical - Carambola (or starfruit) production is increasing because an increasing number of small producers have entered the market. "Anticipated industrywide production this season will be around 4 million pounds of packed fruit, compared to 20,000 pounds of packed fruit 9 years ago." (The Produce News, December 14, 1991, p. 7).

Available - "Agriculture and the Environment" is both the theme and the title of USDA's recently released 1991 Yearbook of Agriculture. Order copies of the 344-page hardback, at \$12 each, from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. Telephone orders may be made to 202-783-3238.

Question - Can you name the three main U.S.--grown peanuts? Answer is somewhere in the newsletter.

500 Years Ago - "I believe the island contains many herbs and many trees which will be worth a great amount in Spain for dyes and as medicinal spices, but I do not recognize them and I much regret that." Christopher Columbus, journal entry, October 19, 1492.

Corn - "[The sailors] found a great quantity of the grain that the Indians call maize, which was well tasted, baked, dried, and made into flour." Christopher Columbus, journal entry recording his men's exploration of Cuba, November 5, 1492.

Specialty Corn - This is the latest factsheet in the series "A Small-Scale Agriculture Alternative," from the USDA Office for Small-Scale Agriculture. Contact: Bud Kerr, USDA-CSRS, OSSA, Suite 328A, Washington, DC 20250-2200; telephone 202-401-1805, Fax 202-401-1804.

Corn vs. Weeds - Send self-addressed label and a 52 cent stamp and you can get a copy of "A Guide to Weed Management in Sweet Corn." Contact: Mary J. Else, IPM Weed Specialist, University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension System, Plant and Social Sciences, French Hall, Amherst, MA 01003; telephone 413-545-5229.

Soy Products - "Tofu, a protein-rich food made from soybeans, has been a mainstay of the East Asian diet for centuries, but in the past few years it has emerged as an alternative protein choice for Americans as well. Tofu is low in calories (a 3 1/2-oz. serving contains 72 calories), fat, and sodium. It contains no cholesterol and is low in saturated fat, so it is a good choice for persons on low-fat, low-cholesterol, or low-sodium diets." (Delaware Agenda, January 1992, p. 8)

Old But Good - The ADAPT 2 book on agriculture diversification is as hot today as it was in 1987 and is available at a cost of \$5, check payable to Successful Farming. Contact: ADAPT Book (1987), Successful Farming Editorial, 1716 Locust, Des Moines, IA 50309-3023; telephone 515-284-2952.

Handbook #3346 - Specialty and Minor Crops Handbook is a looseleaf binder with information on more than 36 specialty crops. The cost is \$30; make check payable to University of California Regents. Contact: Claudia Myers, UC Small Farm Center, University of California, Davis, CA 95616-8689; telephone 916-757-8910.

Tip - Use popcorn or wood shavings instead of nondegradable polystyrene chips to cushion packages.

Hybrid Fruit - Researchers have crossed a weed called the maypop with tropical passion fruit and produced a richly aromatic fruit that makes a delicious juice. Dubbed "passion pop," the new alternative crop could help revive some citrus farmers whose crops have been hit by frost. Contact: A. Ann Amis, USDA-ARS, Southeastern Fruit and Tree Nut Research Laboratory, P.O. Box 87, Byron, GA 31008; telephone 912-956-5656.

Tip - Trees felled for firewood should not be delimbed. Allow the whole tree to sit for a few weeks; the sun will draw out moisture through the leaves.

What's That - Gypsy moth caterpillars are up to 2 1/2 inches long and are distinguished by five pairs of blue spots, followed by six pairs of red spots on their backs. No other

caterpillar has these distinct markings. The caterpillars are covered by long, black hairs to which many people are allergic.

Think - Take care to plant walnut trees away from ornamental plants and vegetable gardens. This is necessary because the roots secrete a chemical that is toxic to many other plants.

Basic Rule - Vegetable transplants should be planted slightly deeper than they were originally grown.

Sweet Potatoes - "An Ohio food processing firm has just introduced a new snack food, Tastee Sweet Chips, which turns the North Carolina yams into fast finger food. It's a vacuum-fried chip similar in size and shape to a potato chip, but more nutritious, according to Greg Hackenbracht, vice president of Tastee Aple Inc. in Newcomerstown, Ohio." (The Produce News, April 18, 1992, p. 11).

Costs \$31 - Proceedings of the March 1990 Symposium titled "Progress on Terrestrial and Marine Natural Products of Medicinal and Biological Interest" is available. Make your check payable to American Botanical Council (ABC). Contact: Margaret Wright, ABC, P.O. Box 201660, Austin, TX 78720; telephone 1-800-373-7105; outside the United States, call 512-331-8868, Fax 512-331-1924.

Late Plantings - Sow the seed twice as deep as you did in spring when moisture was more plentiful. Cover rows with boards, paper, burlap or mulch until they germinate.

Tip - Rambler roses will bloom all summer if the old flower clusters are snipped off regularly.

Women in Agriculture - This new bibliography lists nearly 500 selected articles, books, videotapes, and reports published from January 1979 to July 1991. Copies are available by sending a request, and a self-addressed label. Contact: Jane Gates, National Agricultural Library, Public Services Division, Room 111, 10301 Baltimore Boulevard, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351.

Advancing - "Africanized honey bees reached San Antonio, the largest U.S. city where they have shown up on their migration from South America, scientists confirmed yesterday." (The Washington Times, April 29, 1992, p. A6).

Partake - Respond to a market research survey to determine the level of interest in working on, visiting, and/or vacationing on a working family-oriented organic farm and natural area in east Texas. Contact: David W. Stewart, Nature's Legacy Farm, 1211 E. Corsicana, TX 75751-5105; telephone 903-677-3276, Fax 903-677-1249.

Beekeeper - Mites, mites, mites, oh yes. However, there is life after mites! Available are five helpful and informative videotapes costing \$30 each. Videos are entitled: Varroa Mite, Tracheal Mite, Queen and Package Bee, Requeening and Colony Division, and Keeping Bees. Contact: Steve Forrest, Brushy Mountain Bee Farm, Route 1, Box 135, Moravian Falls, NC 28654; telephone 919-921-3640, Fax 919-921-2681.

Alternative Field Crops - This manual with over 45 chapters on production of alternative field crops has been developed by the Center for Alternative Plant and Animal Products. The cost is \$45. Make check payable to "University of Minnesota." Contact: Laura McCann, CAPAP, 340 Alderman Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108; telephone 612-625-5747, Fax 612-624-4941.

News Release - "Legislation to earmark Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) lending authority for beginning farmers and ranchers and -- for first time -- limit the length of time an individual may participate in FmHA farm lending programs was approved Thursday (5-14-92) by the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, and Rural Development." Contact: Jim Davis, Press Secretary, Committee on Agriculture, U.S. House of Representatives, Room 1301, Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515; telephone 202-225-2171, Fax 202-225-3158.

No - Don't pick or cut leaves off fruiting plants to enhance ripening; actually two negative actions can result: (1) photosynthesis production of plant food is reduced and (2) excessive solar radiation of the fruit may result.

Answer - Spanish, Virginia, and runner peanuts

Annuals for Fillers - In the flower borders, annuals can be set in among the perennials for late bloom. Consider the size of the annual, however.

ISLAND OF INTEGRITY

"I don't believe that the solutions in society will come from the left or the right or the north or the south. They will come from islands within these organizations, islands of people with integrity who want to do something. They will expand and become more powerful... This is what a network should do--identify the people who would like to do something good. And they are everywhere. This is how change will appear--you won't notice the difference. It won't be anyone winning over anyone. It will just spread." Statement made by Karl Henrick Robert. (OFPANA Reports, April 1992, p. 3)

SMALL FARMS

"It is not the abundance of land, but the thorough and skillful cultivation of it, that fills the barn with hay, the cribs with corn, and the mansion house with plenty. For me to crave a larger farm than he can cultivate to profit, is therefore, an expensive folly: for whatever a neglected field is worth, the interest of the capital, together with yearly taxes, will at length eat the field up." (New England Farmer, June 13, 1828, p. 371)

(Mention of commercial enterprises or brand names does not constitute endorsement or imply preference by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 9-14, 1992 - Chestnut Grower's Conference and International Chestnut Conference, Lakeview Resort and Conference Center, Morgantown, WV. Contact: Grower's Conference - R. D. Wallace, c/o Chestnut Hill Nursery, Route 1, Box 341, Alachna, FL 32615; telephone 904-462-2820. International Conference-West Virginia University Conference Office, P.O. Box 6031, 704 Knapp Hall, Morgantown WV; telephone 304-293-4013, Fax 304-293-7163.

July 11-15, 1992 - International Floriculture Industry Short Course Trade Show, Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, OH. Contact: Lucy Tayama, Ohio Florist's Association, 2130 Stella Court, Suite 200, Columbus, OH 43215; telephone 614-487-1117, Fax 614-487-1216.

July 16-18, 1992 - American Emu Association Third Annual Conference and Exhibition, Marriott New Orleans Hotel, New Orleans, LA. Contact: Carter Cook, AEA, 1033 La Posada Drive, Suite 220, Austin, TX 78752-3824; telephone 512-454-0598, Fax 512-454-3036.

August 1, 1992 - Beginning on and for 4 consecutive Saturdays, the 10th Annual Organic Farm and Garden Tours, Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association, Plymouth, OH. Contact: Philip Hale, OEFFA, 559 West Main Street, Wilmington, OH 45177; telephone 513-382-2200.

August 7-9, 1992 - 1992 Sunflower Festival, the twin Red River Valley communities of Wahpeton, ND, and Breckenridge, MN. Contact: Mary Jo McKenzie, City of Wahpeton, 120 N. 4th Street, Wahpeton, ND; telephone 701-642-8559.

August 14-16, 1992 - 18th Annual Summer Conference, Natural Organic Farmers Association, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA. Contact: Julie Rawson, NOFA, RFD2, Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005; telephone 508-355-2853.

September 13-18, 1992 - The 12th Annual Farming-System Symposium, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. Contact: Sue Gibbons, AFSR/E Symposium, Michigan State University, 324 Agriculture Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039; telephone 517-353-5262; Fax 517-353-1888.

September 13-20, 1992 - 2nd International Strawberry Symposium, Radisson Plaza, Lord Baltimore Hotel, Baltimore, MD. Contact: J.L. Maas, USDA-ARS, Fruit Laboratory, PSI, Building 004, Room 111, BARCW, Beltsville, Md 20705; telephone 301-504-7653, Fax 301-504-5062.

September 25-27, 1992 - 1992 Common Ground Price Country Fair, Windsor, ME. Contact: Susan Pierce, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Box 2176, Augusta, ME 04338-2176; telephone 207-622-3118.

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